

**Advent Lutheran Church: Censorship – 3<sup>rd</sup> Letter – November 29, 2011**

To: Advent Lutheran Church Council,  
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Fm: Charlie Dean, member of Advent Lutheran Church, Houston, TX

Date: November 29, 2011

**Ladies and Gentlemen of our Church Council:**

This is the **third letter in a series** addressing **Council's censorship of non-exempt material** and the controversy growing out of it. It is my intent, by posting this on the Internet, to show that there is a process by which a lone church member can hold officers accountable, and especially so when the process has been hijacked by those who control it.

In this letter I will address three allegations against Council:

- (1) Censoring non-exempt material.
- (2) Manipulating the process.
- (3) Misusing C14.02. in a vindictive manner.

[1] Officers devised a scheme and artifice to restrict access to non-exempt church material. I am referring to the non-exempt material that is used in the Congregational Council that is public (open to the congregation). It is understandable that hard copies of older church documents would be unavailable due to there not being enough space to keep everything. However, electronic (digital) copies are in existence that date back at least several years. Council restricted my access to digital documents, and presumably to most other church members who are not well-connected. This involves restrictions on an individual basis so that what is restricted for one member may be available to another, depending on the whim of the officer.

Until a meeting on 11/03/2001 I had not been told that hard copies of material are available for viewing once the room where they are kept is unlocked. I was informed that there are restrictions on getting a copy of such material ("That depends on what he wants it for."). There is still a restriction on digital copies.

[2] It was further part of the scheme that Council officers refused to allow me to add a matter to the agenda, and refused to allow me to address Council in an approximate 30 second to 1 minute presentation. This refusal was in the regular part of the agenda that would have been available to all visitors. This happened on more than one occasion. Apparently Council decided to have one procedure for everyone else and another for me; this was done because Council anticipated that the content of my speech was not what it wanted to hear. The scheme further involved making the agenda unavailable to me. There was a time when visitors at the Congregational Council meeting would be furnished a copy of the agenda so they could follow along. Then, when I was the only visitor, Council decided to stop making it available. Perhaps my being the only (unwanted) visitor was a factor, or perhaps it was just a matter of timing. This happened at two or more Congregational Council meetings I attended; the reason given was that *Council no longer provided that service*. Possible reasons might include: (a) Council did this to save money, (b) Council did this because of convenience, (c) Council did this to make the procedure unfriendly to me, or (d) Council did this to make the procedure unfriendly to all of the Congregation. I suppose only each Council officer involved, and the Almighty, know the motivating factor.

[3] Officers devised a scheme and artifice to use C14.02 against me in a vindictive manner. This involved accusing him of being a *special interest group*, or a member of a *special interest group*. This was done in a selective manner, and was only done because officers were offended at me for (1) requesting digital copies of material and being persistent about it, and (2) attempting to organize digital material and make it available on the Internet so all church members could access it, and (3) not being adequately intimidated or bullied into accepting Council's desired censorship policy.

It appears that when any one, or two, or three church members butts heads with Council officers, officers can dodge a bullet by hiding behind C14.02 and alleging that the church member is acting in an unauthorized *special interest group*. It is niggardly of Council officers to hoard non-exempt information, to the exclusion of the congregation, and then complain in a round about way by vindictive use of C14.02 when a member begins to make the non-exempt information available to the congregation.

I could just as easily accuse Council officers of comprising a *special interest group* (C14.02). They would be a community with an interest in advancing their own personal interests and power, and cooperating to effect this, and they would be using church facilities to boot; arguably, they should cease their activities until they have authorized themselves and their activities in a continuing resolution under C18.01. Their continuing resolution, to be a bit pedantic, should describe their functions as ignoring Advent's governing document, refusing to put requested matters on the agenda, failing to allow me to address Council, continuing to censor non-exempt material, using the governing document vindictively to silence me, hijacking the procedure of communication with Council, bullying & manipulating, claiming authority that they do not have, claiming sources of authority that do not exist, etc. After that, Council's special interest group would be in compliance and, I suppose, could get on with its rat killing.

### **A bit of levity**

A bit of levity always helps one deal with a controversy. I have not lost all hope for our Council officers, as they have potential. There is always plenty of amazing grace to go around. I suggest listening to Arlo Guthrie with Pete Seeger, as they sing *Amazing Grace*.  
< <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqC0XGAk1is&feature=related> />

In light of Council's failure to provide an explanation for its censorship of non-exempt material, I looked for an explanation elsewhere. I believe I found one. An editor for *The Redneck Lutheran Lowdown* had an interview with a church leader of another Lutheran church about a similar censorship problem. It might be instructive in our present controversy. The interview follows.

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## The Redneck Lutheran Lowdown

Interview with Chummy Editor and Otto Autocrat, councilmember of the Hardcore Lutheran Church.



Chummy Editor



Otto Autocrat

Chummy: Hello, Otto. Welcome to the studio.

Otto: Chummy, I'm so glad to be here.

Chummy: I believe you have a new people management tool in your arsenal.

Otto: Yip. Us cronies we've come up with a manifesto to counteract any uppity-acting member that ax for digital material.

Chummy: Uuuuh. Uppity-acting. Tell me more, Otto.

Otto: We call it the *Hell-Fire and Brimstone Doctrine*. Here's a copy, Chummy.

### **Hell-Fire & Brimstone Doctrine**

1. Decisions of Council officers ought no be questioned by any lowly church member.
2. To prevent his from happening, the basis for Council decisions must not be known.
3. It is therefore imperative that lowly church members not learn about concepts that underpin Council decisions.
4. If concepts are to remain unknown, then the salient features of concepts must remain unknown.
5. To assure that any salient features of concepts remain unknown, representations and derivatives of said salient features must be unknown.
6. As material (documents) can represent salient features of concepts, it is imperative that lowly church members not get their grubby and inquisitive paws on such material.
7. Notwithstanding the fact that the overwhelming amount of such material is non-exempt, this does not alter the goal of censorship.
8. To the extent we can pull this off, we will make access to hard copies inconvenient, and digital copies almost impossible.
9. The end justifies the means.

Chummy: This is most impressive, and cogent I might add.

Otto: Yip, we're cogent. This will lead to less responsibility problems or accountability problems. This is the best way for us cronies to maintain proper decorum and avoid embarrassing questions.

Chummy: What do the lowly church members at Hardcore say about this.

Otto: We ain't let this cat out of the bag. This is intellectual property of us cronies and we've got exclusive rights to it. It's still good organic material for defining our authorities and responsibilities.

Chummy: It's organic alright. I'm glad I wore boots today. How do you come up with this good organic stuff?

Otto: Us Lutherans we're more educated and enlightened than other religious groups. And having been strictly scrutinized and duly elected, us cronies comprise the cream of the crop.

Chummy: My upbringing is modest in that area.

Otto: Us cronies, by use of substantive due process has concocted an ad hoc concept of censorship of non-exempt material.

Chummy: Awwwh, it's substantive alright. It has a gooey texture and a foul aroma.

Otto: And by use of substantive due process we've got our own ad hoc method of implementing and enforcing censorship.

Chummy: I'm slipping on the floor.

Otto: Remember that us cronies is motivated by good intentions and compassion. We enjoy riding the crest of enlightenment.

Chummy: Is the restrictions really needed at Hardcore?

Otto: Yep. It is indispensable to prevent run-of-the-mill church members from denuding the cognitive landscape.

Chummy: Really? Denuding the landscape?

Otto: Yes. Letting loose a bunch of digital information could cheapen our hierarchy of control. We don't want no slippage in that department.

Chummy: I hear yall use another tool called the *hassle factor*.

Otto: Yes we do. Our *modi operandi* is to defend what few choke points of information us cronies has got. We employ the *hassle factor* as needed to accomplish this.

Chummy: This has been a most informative interview. Yall's management techniques are so impressive.

Otto: It's hard to be modest. We're like a collective pied piper, offering certain enticements and promises. We expect church members to adjust their participation and giving to accommodate us.

Chummy: We're almost out of time. Can you recommend a song before we split?

Otto: I recommend Jimmy Page & Robert Plant with *My bucket's got a hole in it*.  
< <http://youtu.be/CWw3dVNloVI/> >.

Chummy: Thank's so much for the interview.

Otto: Thanks for having me on the program. I look forward to the next one.